

Volunteer Archaeology Event Offers Opportunities for History and Food Buffs Alike

By: Jackie Banks, Public Affairs Officer, Kaibab National Forest

When you think about archaeology, do blue corn and green chile pancakes come to mind? Or, how about sweet potato quesadillas? Well they would if you had participated in the volunteer archaeology projects – known as Passport in Time – hosted by the Kaibab National Forest over the last 20 years. Next to helping preserve the nation's past, food has been the top priority on these weeklong volunteer adventures.

For the 2010 Passport in Time (PIT) project, which was held on the forest's Tusayan Ranger District, Forest Service archaeologists and volunteers camped out and dined on green curry shrimp stew, Southwestern egg scramble, and golden graham cracker encrusted French vanilla toast, amongst other delicacies.

At the end of each long day of archaeological survey and monitoring, Passport in Time volunteers and professional Forest Service archaeologists came together in camp for cooking and camaraderie. "We always feel that our group cooking is what really makes our projects cohesive," said Neil Weintraub, a Kaibab National Forest archaeologist who has been involved with PIT since it became an official Forest Service program in 1991.

Of course it isn't just the food that makes the Kaibab PIT projects memorable. It is also the important work accomplished toward protecting and preserving the forest's unique cultural sites.

The 2010 project developed as a result of wildland fires that have been managed on the forest in recent years. During these fires, Kaibab archaeologists worked alongside fire crews to protect newly discovered and previously known archaeological sites.

"Because of the low intensity fires we have managed over recent years, the accumulated hazardous fuels were removed, thus protecting these sites from future high intensity wildfires," Weintraub said. "However, we often do not have time to record the sites while the fires are active. So, we decided it would make a great PIT project to record all these newly discovered sites."

During the week in late September, Forest Service archaeologists and PIT volunteers recorded 51 new sites, which included six sweat lodges, nearly 50 brush shelters, and six pueblos. Most

of the brush shelter camps also had earlier prehistoric components, many with projectile points. The PIT group also monitored several previously recorded sweat lodges in both Kaibab National Forest and Grand Canyon National Park, visited and monitored historic cabins, and helped make improvements to Hull Cabin in preparation for its inclusion in the Cabin Rental Program.

“We logged 500 volunteer hours in accomplishing the 2010 Passport in Time project,” Weintraub said. “What is truly amazing is that over the past 20 years, more than 14,000 hours have been contributed by PIT volunteers. That equals nearly seven person years of work.” And, a lot of really delicious meals served up around a campfire.

Photos available at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/kaibabnationalforest/sets/72157624949648269/>